

Wm D. Moore

that faraway land. Yes, Missoula was sure to come that way tomorrow.

He was waiting for them on the next afternoon, and Teddy was swung up on the saddle in a jiffy. But now it was the big policeman who talked, while Missoula listened in shy silence. His name was Jones. "They used to call me 'Shorty' down in the Panhandle because I was so tall," he explained, with a laugh. "No, they don't do it here," in answer to her questioning look. "It wouldn't be healthy for them. The men on the force call me Jim. I haven't any pals up here."

Jim had come to New York with some full blood cattle. But the attractions of the big city proved too much for him, and after a debauch of several days he had come to himself only to find that the rest of the crew had gone back, and he was left alone, adrift. There had been some hard days. Jim spoke of them hesitatingly and with a shamed flush on his tanned cheek.

"But then I got on the force—on account of my riding—and I've been on over a year. I can't complain of the pay, and the work's light enough. But I get such longing for the sun shining in a perfect blue sky and my pony picking his way among the holes of a dog town—the little beggars sitting up and scolding at you as bold as you please—and then scrambling down through the mesquite bushes into a water hole and letting him drink as much as he pleases, and then riding on till the sun sets as it never does up here, bands of light playing right across the sky and a purple glow over everything. Well, when I get to thinking of all that I get uneasy-like and tired of all this crowding. Some fine morning the feeling will be extra strong, and then"—he laughed—"the force will be losing one of its ornaments."

Missoula was looking up eagerly. Her eyes were as blue as the Texas sky of which he spoke and wide with longing. "You will be going back, too, some day, Miss Missoula," he said softly.

She caught her breath sharply, like one suddenly waked from a dream. "Yes," she said dispiritedly, "I s'pose so—when Miss Barker's ready to go."

The three met often after that. Teddy had come to look on Jim Crow as one of his possessions, while Missoula and his master had become the best of friends, and meanwhile a tardy spring was breathing new life into the half thawed slopes of the park. Timid grass blades appeared.

The afternoon sun shone down warmly and showed Missoula engaged in restraining Teddy from picking a spray of the enticing "burning bush." The tall policeman came up during the altercation. As they walked on together he preserved an unwonted silence.

"Spring's about here," Missoula observed at last. "I've been thinking how the prairie must look by now—just one big flower bed."

Jim looked off across the tree tops with eyes, unseeing of their delicate veil of leaves. "I've been thinking, too," he said, "and I just can't stand the city any longer. I'm going back west." Missoula's face paled.

"I'd have gone long ago if it hadn't been for you, Missoula." He looked down now and as he saw her agitation went on eagerly: "I won't go now unless you will go too. I've been saving money, and I've written out, so there's a position ready. Won't you go, Missoula?"

Missoula's face blushed a rosy red, but she met his ardent gaze frankly. "Yes, I'll go, Jim," she said. "I trust you. Teddy's getting so old now he won't be missing me. And, oh, Jim, we'll be going back to the west together!" There was a choke in her voice.

Jim drew her to him, and it was well that the path was deserted or observers might have been scandalized by the spectacle of one of the force who had quite forgotten his dignity.

Had the Effect.
"Yes," she said in answer to something he had said, "the old songs are very beautiful."

"Beautiful!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Beautiful hardly describes them. They are—they are—well, compared with them the songs of today are trash, the veriest trash."

"I agree with you, yet the old songs sometimes contain sentiments that one cannot wholly approve."

"I think you are mistaken."

"I will give you an illustration. There is John Howard Payne's 'Home, Sweet Home,' for instance. You surely do not agree with all the sentiments it contains?"

"Why not?" he asked warmly. "Why not?"

"Because," she said, glancing at the clock, which was marking the hour of 11, "because there is a line in that song which says 'There's no place like home.' You do not believe that, do you?"

Then he coughed a hollow cough and arose and went silently out into the night.

Hidden Crackers.
In the preface to Gail Hamilton's poems, published under the title "Chips, Fragments and Vestiges," the sister of the dead author says that a few yellowed papers exist covered with her verses written in a childish hand.

One such sheet has the heading "Chips and Fragments." Another is called "Mary A. Dodge's Scribbles." These were all written before she was twelve years old. But the earliest, written when she was eight, is the best:

When mother hides her crackers in
Old coffeepots all made of tin,
We seldom ever find them out,
Although all day we look about.

Now, though we all like crackers well,
And believe have enough to sell,
Yet we all hid them up so fast
That mother hates to make them last.

This "poem" was solemnly and silently handed to "mother" by the little author after she had discovered where the crackers were hidden.

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